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Draft report

Addendum

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Programme questions: proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (item 3 (b))

Programme 6. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services

1. At its 9th meeting, on 13 June 2000, the Committee considered programme 6, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 (A/55/6 (Prog. 6)).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services introduced programme 6 and responded to queries raised during the Committee's consideration of the programme.

Discussion*

3. The proposed programme was generally supported, in view of the importance of the work undertaken by the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services and the efforts demonstrated in improving its work.

4. The importance of the provision of timely and high-quality documentation in all official languages of the United Nations, as well as of availability of interpretation services, including the meetings of regional groups, was emphasized. In this context, concern was expressed that the quality of translation done on a contractual basis had not always been consistent and that the arrangement should be kept under review. The introduction and use of new technology by the Department

* Not discussed fully.

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was welcomed, and it was emphasized that it should be geared towards improving the quality and efficiency of work. The use of the Optical Disk System was noted with satisfaction. It was expressed that expansion of a new technology in the distribution of documentation should not be considered as a substitution of the traditional means of distribution, which should continue.

5. Support was expressed for the efforts made in expanding the sharing of workload among the various conference centres of the Organization and in the transformation of specific conference services into a United Nations common service. In this context, with reference to paragraph 6.2, views were expressed that efficiency should be strengthened at all conference-servicing centres and not only at Vienna, and that development of conference services as common services should be one of the objectives of the programme.

6. Concern was expressed about the fact that conference services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi had not been included in the formulation of the programme, as all United Nations conference centres should be treated equally. To that end, reference was made to General Assembly resolution 54/248 of 23 December 1999, which addressed a number of issues related to the United Nations Office at Nairobi. It was underlined that conference services at that Office should be included in the overall orientation of the programme and that they should also formulate part of the strategies proposed under subprogrammes 2, 3 and 4.

7. It was noted with concern that there was a tendency for the United Nations Environment Programme to hold some of its meetings in other locations rather than at Nairobi. In this connection, views were expressed that the "headquarters rule" in relation to meetings of the United Nations intergovernmental and treaty organs located at Nairobi should be upheld and reinforced.

8. The objectives proposed under the programme were supported, except subprogramme 2. With regard to subprogramme 2, paragraph 6.10, views were expressed that the first objective was too restrictive and should be reformulated, as it implied budgetary constraints. It was also pointed out that rationalization of the allocation of resources was not a primary target, but rather one of the means for improving efficiency of conference services and, therefore, could not be an objective in the medium-term plan. Views were expressed that enhancement of the conference-servicing capacity of the Organization should be an objective of subprogramme 2.

9. It was stated that outsourcing of common conference-servicing needs, document production and printing should be pursued where economically viable and that this should be considered as a separate objective for subprogramme 2.

10. With regard to the expected accomplishment proposed for subprogramme 3, it was stated that, as indicated in paragraph 6.16, the term "progressive enhancement" was not time-limited, and that the achievement of an objective should at least have a time-frame, in order for an assessment to be made as to whether or not the objective had been met within a certain time.

11. It was observed that the indicators of achievement proposed in paragraphs 6.13, 6.17 and 6.21 were too general to allow for a determination as to whether the objectives of the subprogrammes had been reached. Suggestions were made that there should be a specific mechanism established to measure the degree of satisfaction of Member States on programme performance and that relevant

resolutions adopted by United Nations organs should be utilized in measuring the achievement of objectives. It was also expressed that achievement indicators should be established through a dialogue between Member States and the Secretariat.

12. It was stated that there should be no reference made to remote interpretation in paragraph 6.19 of subprogramme 4, as it had not been adopted by the General Assembly or any other intergovernmental body as an interpretation mode. While it was supported, remote interpretation should only be used for the United Nations meetings and conferences held outside the established United Nations locations and should not become a regular interpretation arrangement.

13. A query was raised on paragraphs 6.4 and 6.6 on the role of the programme as it related to conducting research and preparing analytical studies on the rules and procedures and on the application and interpretation of the provisions of the relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations.

14. It was observed that paragraph 6.5 should make a reference to seminars organized by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples among the activities which would be serviced in the context of subprogramme 1.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the approval of programme 6, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services, of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, subject to the following modifications:

(a) Overall orientation:

(i) In the first sentence of paragraph 6.1, under (b), after the words "at Headquarters and at", the words "the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV)" should be replaced with the words "the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi";

(ii) The last sentence of paragraph 6.2 should be deleted and replaced by the following: "Further steps should be taken to establish new unified conference-servicing facilities as a United Nations common service and to strengthen the efficiency of existing unified conference-servicing facilities as a United Nations common service.";

(iii) After paragraph 6.2, a new paragraph 6.3 should be inserted, reading: "The Department will take the necessary steps to strengthen the efficiency and increase the utilization of the conference-servicing facility at Nairobi." All subsequent paragraphs should be renumbered accordingly;

(b) Paragraph 6.3, Objectives: In the second sentence, after the words "Other Matters related to the Security Council" replace the comma with the word "and"; after the words "Development in Africa," delete "and the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations";

(c) Paragraph 6.5, Strategy: The phrase ", regional seminars," should be added after the words "visiting missions";

(d) Paragraph 6.10, Objectives: The paragraph should be replaced with the following:

> **"The main objective of the subprogramme is to improve the global planning and coordination of conference services with rational allocation and capacity utilization of the existing conference resources. Another objective is to ensure that intergovernmental bodies, special conferences and Member States in general have access to meeting and documentation services in accordance with the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the various bodies and organs of the United Nations.";**

(e) Paragraph 6.11, Strategy: In the first sentence, the words "Geneva and Vienna" should be replaced with the words "Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi";

(f) Paragraph 6.12, Expected accomplishment: The paragraph should be replaced with the following:

> **"An expected accomplishment would be improved quality and efficiency of conference services provided to the United Nations organs and satisfaction of all requirements in this regard. Another expected accomplishment would be the implementation of the practice of unified conference servicing in other United Nations conference facilities where feasible and more cost-effective, without adversely affecting the quality of services provided.";**

(g) Paragraph 6.15, Strategy: In the first sentence, the words "Geneva and Vienna" should be replaced with the words "Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi";

(h) Paragraph 6.16, Expected accomplishment: The words "a progressive" should be replaced with the word "the";

(i) Paragraph 6.17, Indicator of achievement: After the word "receive" the phrase ", and an evaluation of the timeliness of documents produced, while taking into account the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly," should be inserted;

(j) Paragraph 6.19, Strategy:

(i) In the first sentence, the words "Geneva and Vienna" should be replaced with the words "Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi";

(ii) At the end of the second sentence, the phrase ", while ensuring that the quality of interpretation is not affected" should be inserted after the words "General Assembly resolutions";

(iii) At the end of the fifth sentence, the phrase "while not affecting the traditional means" should be inserted after the phrase "in the distribution area";

(k) Paragraph 6.21, Indicators of achievement: Under indicator (b), the phrase "in the six official languages simultaneously" should be added at the end of the sentence;

(l) Legislative mandates:

(i) Under subprogramme 1, reference to resolutions 53/208, 54/248 and 54/249 should be added to the list of General Assembly resolutions, and reference to resolution 52/220 should be deleted;

(ii) Under subprogrammes 2, 3 and 4, reference to General Assembly resolutions 50/11 and 53/208 should be added.

16. The Committee further recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to revise the operational arrangements for the conference services in Nairobi and transfer the responsibility for those services to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, with a view to the management of the conference-servicing resources in all United Nations established headquarters in an integrated manner and achievement of the most efficient utilization of the resources, and to report on the implementation of that reorganization in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003.